

Backcountry Camping Trip Guide

One Night

National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
Shenandoah National Park
Emergency: 1-800-732-0911



Big Run Loop and AT Circuit

Standard - Circuit

Level: Beginner or Strenuous Beginner

Total Length: 6.8 to 13.8 miles

Trip Description: Wilderness valley, excellent camping and fishing (open for harvest)

Entry: 81 MP - Big Run OL/Doyles River Pkg

Exit: 81 MP - Big Run OL/Doyles River Pkg

Map(s): PATC #11 South District

Day One

Campsite: Big Run Portal/Loop Trails - backcountry

2.7 to 6.2 miles

From Big Run Overlook, hike down Big Run Loop 2.2 miles.

Turn right onto Big Run Portal, hike for 0.5 mile to 4 miles while looking for a place to camp (see notes below).

Day Two

4.1 to 7.6 miles

Return to Big Run Loop, 0.5 mile to 4 miles.

Turn right onto Big Run Loop and hike up the southern side.

At the intersection with Rockytop turn left to continue on Big Run Loop (total 2 miles).

Turn left onto the Appalachian Trail (AT) hiking north 1.5 miles.

Turn left onto Doyles River, hiking a short distance to the parking area.

Cross Skyline Drive to return to vehicle.

Notes

Excellent camping and fishing are available throughout the Big Run drainage. This wilderness hollow is well worth exploring. Take your time to find a nice, legal campsite.

The multiple stream crossings on Big Run Portal can be knee to waist high when the water is up. Beware in the spring and after heavy rains!

Groups can also take this trip, but it will be more strenuous. You should plan on hiking 4 miles down Big Run to find a place to camp. Follow the trail until you reach Brown Mountain Trail, then leave the park trail and follow social trails leading downstream while looking for a place to camp. Your first day will be 6.2 miles, and your second day will either be the same, or add 1.4 miles for the loop with the AT at the end.

Options

Shorter option: 5.4 to 12.4 miles

From Big Run Overlook, hike down Big Run Loop 2.2 miles.

Turn right onto Big Run Portal and begin looking for a place to camp (see notes below), 0.5 mile to 4 miles. Return via same route.

For a two-night trip, simply find a pre-existing site your first night, and stay in that site your second night as well. You will find plenty of places to explore in Big Run on your second day.